

IOWA BIRD LIFE

Fall 1993 Volume 63 Number 4



IOWA ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION

IOWA BIRD LIFE

Fall 1993

Volume 63, Number 4

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FRONT COVER: Vermilion Flycatcher, Rathbun Reservoir Appanoose County, 25 October 1992.
Photograph by Tim Schantz, Otley, Iowa.

INSIDE BACK COVER: Editorial Staff, Subscription/Membership Information,
Instructions to Authors, Officers, Board of Directors, Standing Committees.

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The IOWA ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION, founded in 1923, encourages interest in the identification, study, and protection of birds in Iowa and seeks to unite those who have these interests in common. *Iowa Bird Life* and *I.O.U. News* are quarterly publications of the Union.

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Original manuscripts, notes, letters (indicate if for publication), editorials, and other materials relating to birds and bird finding in Iowa should be sent to the editor. Accepted manuscripts will generally be published promptly, depending on space available, with the following absolute deadlines: 15 November for the Winter issue; 15 February for the Spring issue; 15 May for the Summer issue; and 15 July for the Fall issue. Most manuscripts will be refereed. All material should be typed double-spaced or hand printed in ink on 8 1/2 by 11 inch paper. Authors should pattern their style after a current issue of the journal. If you want more detailed guidelines or advice regarding the appropriateness of your topic for *Iowa Bird Life*, send a self-addressed stamped envelope to the editor. Manuscripts may also be submitted on computer disk (Word 4.0 for Macintosh or compatible programs). Please submit one printed copy of the manuscript with the disk.

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20-22 May 1994, Ames

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Anyone observing birds in Iowa is encouraged to report their findings on a quarterly basis to the Field Reports editors. Sample reporting and documentation forms suitable for duplication are available from the editor (send self-addressed stamped envelope to Jim Dinsmore, 4024 Arkansas Dr., Ames, IA 50010). An article describing the reporting process is also available.

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- *Winter (Dec, Jan, Feb)--3 March (W. Ross Silcock, Box 300, Tabor, IA 51653)
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- *Fall (Aug, Sep, Oct, Nov)--3 December (Thomas H. Kent, 211 Richards St., Iowa City, IA 52246)

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IOWA BIRDLINE 319-338-9881

The birdline is a recorded summary of interesting recent bird sightings in Iowa. At the end of the report you can leave a message and report recent sightings. Be sure to give your name and phone number as well as the location of the bird and date seen. Call in as soon as possible after sighting a rare bird. Jim Fuller checks the reports daily and updates the recording on Monday, so make sure Sunday sightings are reported by Sunday night.

I.O.U. NEWS

Send items of interest for the newsletter to the editors (J. Hank and Linda Zaletel, 1928 6th St., Nevada, IA 50201.

MATERIALS AVAILABLE

The following materials may be obtained by writing the editorial office (Iowa Bird Life, 4024 Arkansas Dr., Ames, IA 50014):

- *Order form for back issues of *Iowa Bird Life*: send self-addressed stamped envelope.
- *Field Checklist of Iowa Birds--1992 Edition: 6 for \$1.00, postpaid. Also available at annual meetings.

REPORTING NEBRASKA BIRDS

Sightings of Nebraska birds, including those within the Nebraska portion of DeSoto N.W.R., should be reported to Loren and Babs Padelford, 1405 Little John Road, Bellevue, NE 68005. Formats for reporting and documentation are the same as for Iowa. The Nebraska Bird Line, available 24 hours a day, is 402-292-5325. Iowa birders are encouraged to report their Nebraska sightings to this number.

ADDRESS CHANGES

Please send address changes/corrections to Pam Allen, 1601 Pleasant St., West Des Moines, IA 50265.

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RANGE EXPANSION OF GREAT-TAILED GRACKLES IN IOWA, 1983-92

STEPHEN J. DINSMORE AND JAMES J. DINSMORE

During the 1900s, the Great-tailed Grackle has undergone a rapid range expansion, spreading north and west from its original stronghold in southern Texas and Mexico. By 1992, it was found north to the central Great Plains, east to central Louisiana and southwestern Arkansas, and west to the coast of southern California. Additionally, vagrants have wandered to several states and Canadian provinces outside of its nesting range. Great-tailed Grackles had reached northwestern Missouri by 1976 and eastern Nebraska by 1977 (Dinsmore and Dinsmore 1993). Thus its expansion into Iowa was expected.

Great-tailed Grackles were first found in Iowa in 1983 (Silcock 1983). In the decade following, there have been numerous reports of great-tails as it has gradually occupied additional parts of the state. In this paper, we analyze several aspects of these reports to try to better understand the range expansion in Iowa.

METHODS

We searched all issues of *Iowa Bird Life* from 1983 through mid 1993 for reports of Great-tailed Grackles and supplemented these reports with a few unpublished observations of our own and other workers. In this paper, we summarize all reports of Great-tailed Grackles through 1992. Except for nesting records, we have not cited the individual field report articles in which observations were published; these are available in *Iowa Bird Life*.

RESULTS

Through 1992, Great-tailed Grackles were reported 58 times in Iowa. (We have considered multiple sightings of one or more grackles at a single site within a season as one report.) Most reports (44) were from southwestern (23) and west-central (21) Iowa. None were from northeastern Iowa and only one each were from northwestern, east-central, and southeastern Iowa.

Great-tailed Grackles were first reported in Iowa in May 1983 when a pair was seen near Glenwood in Mills County, in the southwestern corner of the state. The secondhand report of a "Boat-tailed Grackle" near Wheatland in Clinton County in October 1961 (Brown 1961) is intriguing but not enough details are given to identify the bird and that report is not included in our analysis. Great-tails were reported from nearby Fremont County later in 1983, in two more counties the next year, and in four more counties in 1986 (Figure 1). The reports of great-tails in Tama County in 1986 and 1990 were the easternmost records until 1992 when individuals reached Johnson and Louisa counties. Reports from Hancock County in 1988 and Dickinson County in 1989 (Carol Thompson, pers. comm.) extended the species' range north to near the Minnesota border. Curiously, great-tails didn't reach Minnesota until spring 1993 (Janssen 1993). Through 1992, Great-tailed Grackles had been reported from 19 of Iowa's 99 counties (Figure 1).

Of the 19 counties from which great-tails have been reported, 11 have had birds present only one year, two have had them present two years, two have had them three years, and four counties have had birds present five or more years (Figure

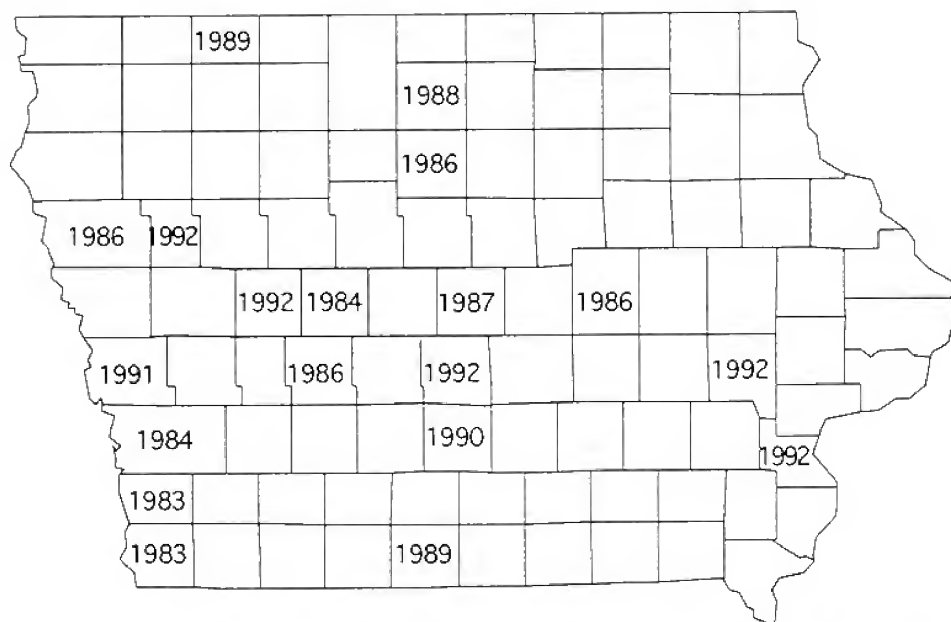


Figure 1. Date of first record for Great-tailed Grackles in various Iowa counties.

2. Great-tails have been reported most often from Fremont (8 of 10 years) and Greene, Guthrie, and Mills (5 of 10 years) counties during 1983-92.

SEASONAL OCCURRENCE

The seasonal pattern of occurrence of Great-tailed Grackles in Iowa is shown in Table 1. Since some records include birds that were seen at a single site over a period of two or more months, the total shown here exceeds the 58 individual reports mentioned above. Spring migrants may arrive as early as late March although most records are from April through June. They may begin nesting in mid May, though most nesting reports are from June. The few fall records show no clear pattern. It seems likely that most great-tails leave soon after nesting, with few birds lingering. The three winter records are from December. Two of the three were birds seen on Christmas Bird Counts and two of the three were individuals seen entering a nighttime roost with other blackbirds. Great-tails probably do not normally overwinter in Iowa. However, small numbers regularly overwinter in northwestern Missouri, so it is possible some birds may occasionally spend the winter in Iowa.

NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS

The number of individuals was recorded for 55 of the 58 reports. Most often it was a single bird (24 reports, 43.6%) but two birds (usually a pair) were found 14 times (25.5%) and three or more birds were found 17 times (30.9%). The only reports of more than 10 birds were 18 at Lakin Slough in spring 1986, groups of 20 and 30 in Fremont County in fall 1986, and 6 pairs at Goose Lake, Greene County in spring 1991.

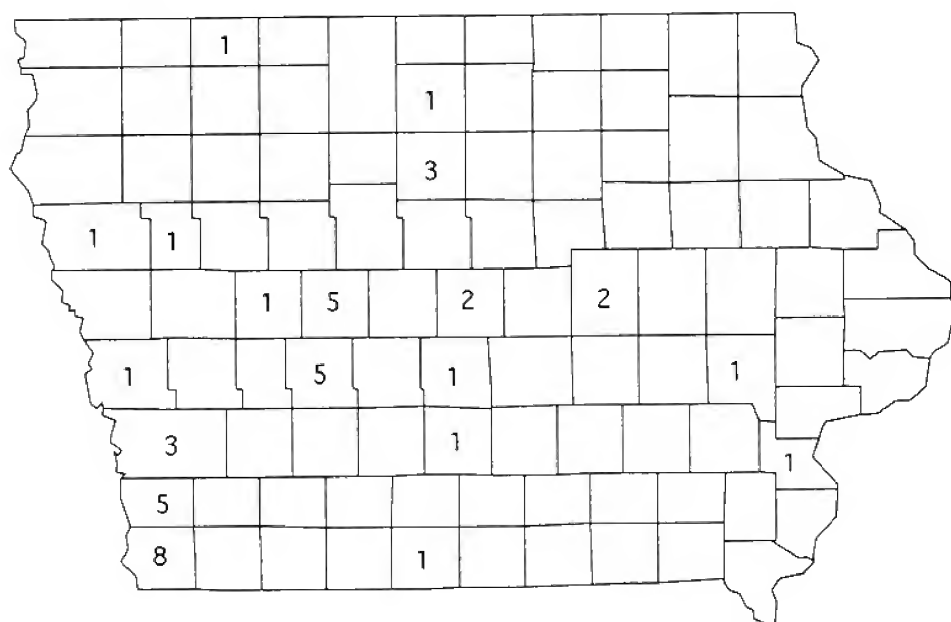


Figure 2. Number of years Great-tailed Grackles have been reported in various Iowa Counties, 1983-1992.

NESTING

The first nesting record for the state was in 1983 when a pair nested at Riverton Wildlife Area, Fremont County (Silcock 1983). The next year the species reached central Iowa when a pair nested near Jefferson in Greene County (Brown 1985). Two years later, great-tails nested in Woodbury County in northwestern Iowa, Guthrie and Greene counties in west-central Iowa, and Wright County in north-central Iowa. Since then, the species' nesting range in Iowa has shown little change.

There have been 12 reports of nesting in Iowa (Table 2), and most (7 of 12) are from west-central Iowa (Figure 3). Great-tails have nested as far north as Hancock County in north-central Iowa and near Sioux City in Woodbury County. Hancock County is both the northernmost and easternmost nesting record for the species.

Table 1. Month of occurrence of Great-tailed Grackles in Iowa, 1983-1992.

Month	No. Reports	Month	No. Reports
January	0	July	9
February	0	August	3
March	2	September	2
April	12	October	1
May	27	November	1
June	16	December	3

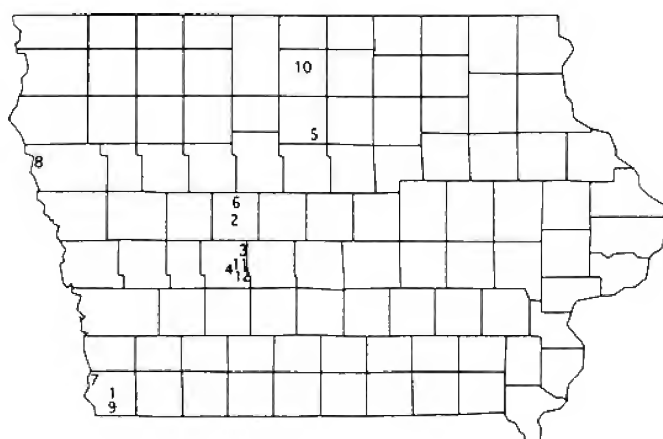


Figure 3. Great-tailed Grackle nesting records in Iowa. Numbers indicate location of nesting record and correspond to records that are listed in Table 2.

COLONIZERS

The sex and social status of birds that colonize a new area is of interest in understanding the pattern of range expansion. We were able to determine the group size and sex for the first report for 17 of the 19 counties from which great-tails have been reported. It is likely that in at least some of these cases, the first bird that actually reached the area was not seen or reported in the literature. In eight cases (47.1%), the first bird was one male, in seven cases (41.2%) it was a pair, and in two cases (11.8%) it was more than two birds. The slight prevalence of single males being the first bird to reach a new area in Iowa matches the pattern shown for the species elsewhere in its range (Dinsmore and Dinsmore 1993).

Table 2. Nesting records of Great-tailed Grackles in Iowa. (I.B.L.=Iowa Bird Life)

Date	Location	County	Evidence	Source
1. July 1983	Riverton W.A.	Fremont	female with young	Silcock 1983
2. May 1984	Finn Pond	Greene	nest with eggs	Brown 1985
3. May 1986	Long Pond	Guthrie	nest	I.B.L. 56:93
4. May 1986	Lakin Slough	Guthrie	five nests	I.B.L. 56:93
5. May-June 1986	Big Wall Lake	Wright	nest	pers. obs, SJD
6. May-June 1986	Goose Lake	Greene	nest	pers. obs, SJD
7. June 1986	Forney Lake	Fremont	nest	I.B.L. 56:119
8. July 1986	Sioux City	Woodbury	pair and young	I.B.L. 56:119
9. summer 1987	Riverton W.A.	Fremont	female and young	I.B.L. 57:123
10. June 1988	Eagle Lake	Hancock	nest with eggs	I.B.L.58:112
11. June 1989	Lakin Slough	Guthrie	three nests	I.B.L. 59:114
12. May 1990	Lakin Slough	Guthrie	nest	I.B.L. 60:72

HABITAT

Great-tailed Grackles are birds of open and partially disturbed habitats. Most reports of them in Iowa have been associated with some type of wetland. In 8 of the 12 nesting records, the nest was built in emergent vegetation over water. One nest was placed in a hedgerow near a marsh and two others were in trees in a deserted farmstead near a marsh. In one case, the nest site was not described.

DISCUSSION

After an explosive appearance in Iowa, the Great-tailed Grackle's range changed little from 1986 until 1992, remaining largely confined to the southwestern quarter of the state. The addition of five more counties to its range in 1992 suggest that it is still expanding and occupying new areas. Surprisingly, great-tails have not colonized the wetlands of northwestern Iowa although they have reached several similar areas in north-central Iowa (e.g., Eagle Lake, Big Wall Lake). The only report from northwestern Iowa was a male at Silver Lake in Dickinson County. We believe that there is much suitable habitat in that region and that great-tails might do well there if they colonized the area. With this article, we remember our friend Eric Munson who shared with us the discovery of the Great-tailed Grackle nest at Eagle Lake. We appreciate the comments of Erwin Klaas on an earlier version of this article.

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- Dinsmore, J. J., and S. J. Dinsmore. 1993. Range expansion of the Great-tailed Grackle in the 1900s. *J. Iowa Acad. Sci.* 100:54-59.
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- W. R. Silcock. 1983. Great-tailed Grackle in southwest Iowa: continuation of an explosive range expansion. *Iowa Bird Life* 53:106-107.

Dept. of Zoology, North Carolina State Univ., Box 7617, Raleigh, NC 27695 and 4024 Arkansas Drive, Ames, IA 50014

Figure 4. Great-tailed Grackle nest, Iakin Slough, 10 June 1989.

Photo by Steve Dinsmore



IN MEMORIAM: LILLIAN SERBOUSEK

HANK ZALETEL

Lillian Serbousek joined the Iowa Ornithologists' Union (I.O.U.) in 1931. At the time of her death, 29 December 1991, only one other member of the I.O.U. had belonged longer than she (Philip DuMont of Chapel Hill, North Carolina who joined in 1924).

Born 12 December 1900 in Cedar Rapids, she attended Washington High School graduating in 1919. During the next seven years she taught in Mt. Vernon, Walford, and Belle Plaine. From 1926 to her retirement in 1967, she taught in the Cedar Rapids school system. In 1934, she graduated magna cum laude from Coe College with a degree in zoology.

During her long membership in the I.O.U., she submitted numerous accounts of bird sightings, field trips, and activities of the Cedar Rapids Audubon to Iowa Bird Life. She served one term as Vice President from 1938-1939. She became the Secretary/Treasurer when Walter Rosene died in early 1942, a post she held until June 1951.

She was an active member of the Cedar Rapids Audubon, a charter member who joined the club in 1929. In 1978 the club recognized her many years of service by making her an honorary member. She remained an active member of both the I.O.U. and Cedar Rapids Audubon well into her eighties, attending field trips and submitting field reports.

1928 6th Street, Nevada, IA 50201

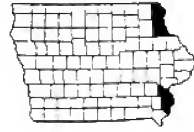


Lillian Serbousek, 1900-1991

RED-SHOULDERED HAWK REPRODUCTIVE SUCCESS IN IOWA DURING 1993

JON STRAVERS AND KELLY MCKAY

We monitored 11 of the 21 known Red-shouldered Hawk (*Buteo lineatus*) nesting sites in Iowa during the spring and summer of 1993 when water levels on many Iowa rivers reached record high levels. Both the locally heavy rains and the duration of the high-water levels appeared to directly affect reproductive success of Red-shouldered Hawks, an endangered species in Iowa.



During most years, water levels along midwestern streams recede by early or mid-June when young red-shoulders leave the nest. However, water levels at all red-shoulder nest sites during this period in 1993 were at least two feet deep during the fledgling periods, and in some cases the nest trees were submerged by as much as seven to ten feet of water at the base of the tree.

Of the 11 nesting attempts monitored in Allamakee, Clayton, Louisa, and Des Moines counties, only 4 were successful, or at least produced nestling Red-shouldered Hawks; the other 7 nesting attempts were abandoned or failed to produce hatchlings. A total of 11 nestling Red-shouldered Hawks reached fledgling age; however, at least 6 of these eventually drowned or failed to survive their first flight. Based on nesting attempts for which we have data, Red-shouldered Hawk survival rates for 1993 were 0.45 fledglings per nesting attempt or 1.25 fledglings per successful nesting attempt. This survival rate is less than the 2.9 nestlings per nesting attempt reported for Iowa by Bednarz and Dinsmore (1981), and also less than the 1.92 per nesting attempt that Henny et al. (1979) calculated was necessary to maintain a stable population.

In comparison, between 1983 and 1992 we determined the outcome of 44 Red-shouldered Hawk nesting attempts; of these, 33 (75%) were successful producing 71 fledging-age Red-shouldered Hawks for an average of 1.61 fledglings per nesting attempt or 2.15 fledglings per successful nesting attempt. This overall survival rate compares favorably with other success rates reported from both the Midwest and northeastern United States (Hands et al. 1989).

During the last decade, we have found a high nest-site fidelity for Red-shouldered Hawks in Iowa; 88.2% of the nesting sites located have been occupied during subsequent years. We plan to continue observations on red-shoulder nesting in 1994, especially along the Upper Mississippi River, in order to document nest-site fidelity and reproductive success after the floods of 1993.

Funding for this project was provided by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers, and the Midwest Raptor Research Fund.

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Henny, C. J. 1972. An analysis of the population dynamics of selected avian species with special reference to changes during the modern pesticide era. U. S. Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife, Wildlife Research Report 1, Washington, DC. 99 pp.

Midwest Raptor Research Fund/Iowa Raptor Foundation, P.O. Box 32, Pella, IA 50219 (JS) and Midwest Raptor Research Fund, 420 1st Ave., Hampton, IL 61256 (KM)

FIELD REPORTS-SUMMER 1993

JAMES J. DINSMORE

WEATHER

The weather this summer was dominated by two words, rain and floods. The string of consecutive months with the rainfall above normal extended to nine with both June and July having statewide average rainfalls well above normal. The number of individual storms that dumped 5 inches or more on an area is far too many to list here. Perhaps the reports of 7-10 or more inches of rain in the Carroll-Jefferson area on 8-9 July will give an idea of what kind of summer it was. The result was flooding in virtually every major watershed in Iowa. With the soil already saturated from earlier rains, the storm on 8-9 July inundated the Raccoon River basin and caused the worst flooding on record in the Des Moines area. Add to that a brimful Saylorville Reservoir and you have flooding downstream, first at Red Rock and then down the valley to the Mississippi. In addition, the Iowa River filled the Coralville Reservoir to record levels, leading to flooding in Iowa City and downstream. Even Rathbun Reservoir filled up and went over its spillway. All four of the major reservoirs (Coralville, Rathbun, Red Rock, Saylorville) set records for their levels and outflows. The Mississippi River was out of its banks and broke through levees, flooding bottomland as the flood crest moved along Iowa's eastern border. In mid July the Missouri River also spilled out of its banks and flooded many low areas, especially in southwestern Iowa where it and the Nishnabotna River flooded many areas near Hamburg. If this wasn't enough, the Iowa Great Lakes region had record high water too. By the end of July, many parts of Iowa had already received as much rain in the first seven months of 1993 as they normally receive in a full year. In Ames, we had 16 inches of rain in July, the most the city has ever received in any month in recorded history and the year's total to date was about 6 inches above the normal total for an entire year.

With all of the precipitation, little note was given to temperatures which in general were cooler than normal with few days even reaching into the lower 90s.

Now for the birds. Predictably I received few reports of birds at Riverton, any of the reservoirs, or numerous other sites that are typically visited in summer. With probably 1-2 million acres of cropland flooded at some time, there was plenty of shorebird habitat but they seemed to be so scattered that few people reported any. The big question is what effect did this weather have on birds and especially their nesting success. My own guess is that nest losses were high for many ground nesting birds such as pheasants, Killdeer, and nighthawks. My entomologist friends tell me that this kind of weather is hard on insects as well, killing many that live on the ground and washing others off the vegetation. I suspect that this played further havoc with many birds since most of our nesting species feed their young insects.



UNUSUAL SPECIES

The most unusual nesting report was a pair of Red-necked Grebes that tried to nest near Estherville. Other good finds of nesting birds were two nesting attempts by Sandhill Cranes, successful nesting by two pairs of Peregrine Falcons, the continued increase in the Bald Eagle nesting population, fair nesting success by Piping Plovers at Council Bluffs, and an increase in the number of reports of both species of bitterns. Other good finds were nests or broods of Eared Grebe, Canvasback, Northern Harrier, and Eurasian Tree Sparrow. The latter may be the first indication of nesting in Iowa. Intensive field work in the Iowa City area turned up several local firsts including Acadian Flycatcher and Louisiana Waterthrush. On the minus side, Least Terns did not nest at Council Bluffs.

Among the non nesting species, the big news was the plethora of reports of Cattle Egrets. They were everywhere and were present in record numbers in southwestern Iowa. The parallels between their abundance this year and 1984, the year that they nested near Glenwood are interesting; both were wet years with lots of flooding. Are the birds attracted to Iowa in such years or were their nesting colonies elsewhere flooded out? As is typical for summer, there were few casual or accidental species reported. Mississippi Kites returned to Clive for the third straight year and again seemed to be nesting although concrete evidence is still lacking. Other good finds were Western Grebes back at Silver Lake although they didn't nest this year, Snowy Egret, several reports of Osprey, Barn Owl, Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Prairie Warbler, and Henslow's Sparrow. The latter two may have nested. On the negative side, despite all of the flooded-field habitat, few migrant shorebirds were reported.

SPECIES DATA

* = documented, [] = record date

Common Loon: 1 at Clear L. on 3 Jun (TL) and 1 at Trumbull L. on 2, 10 Jul (LAS) were the only reports.

Pied-billed Grebe: Evidence of nesting was reported from Cerro Gordo, Clay, Dickinson, Emmet, Kossuth, Palo Alto, Story, Winnebago, and Worth counties.

Red-necked Grebe: A pair building a nest on a restored wetland w of Estherville on 9 Jun (*BEh) provided two firsts; Iowa's first summer record since 196 and the first nesting attempt. The birds were not there the next day and presumably deserted the site, perhaps because of high winds.

Eared Grebe: More were reported than usual: 2 nw of Gilmore City in Pocahontas Co. on 5 Jun (JJD), 6 at Forney L. on 5 Jun and 2 there 23 Jun (BKP, LJP), 9 at Grover L. in Dickinson Co. on 14 Jun (JJD), up to 7 at Silver L., Worth Co. on 23, 26 Jun (JLW, RAG, DRP), and 2 adults and 5 young w of Center L. in Dickinson Co. on 4 Jul (S. Nomsen, Mark Schutt fide DCH).

Western Grebe: 1 at Hottes L. on 21 Jun (M. Schubert fide DCH), 2 at Silver L. on 23, 26 Jun (RAG, JLW, DRP), and 1 at Trumbull L. on 10 Jul (LAS) were the only reports.

American White Pelican: Pelicans were again widespread although not as much so as in 1992. They were found in Appanoose, Clay, Dickinson, Harrison, Iowa, Kossuth, Lee, Mills, Polk, Winnebago, and Wright counties. The 450 at Hottes L. in Dickinson Co. on 13 June (LAS) was the most.

Double-crested Cormorant: 300 nests n of Clinton in early Jun (Mike Griffin fide JJD) and 9 nests at Union Slough N.W. R. on 17 Jun (MCK) were the only nesting reports. None hatched at Union Slough. Besides 43 at Coralville Res. on 18 Jul (DLD), 1-12 were found in Appanoose, Cerro Gordo, Dickinson, Fremont, Lee, Polk, and Worth counties.

American Bittern: A banner year for this species, a nest was found at Spring Run W. A. in Dickinson Co. and nesting probably occurred at restored wetlands in Clay, Dickinson, Kossuth, and Palo Alto counties (Julie Schreiber fide JJD). 2 at Union Slough N.W.R. on 17, 26 Jun (MCK) and 1 at Elm L. in Wright Co. on 22 Jul (THK) were the other reports.

- Least Bittern:** A nest was found at Spring Run W.A. in June (Julie Schreiber fide JJD), another at Errington M. in Polk Co. (fide HZ), and 2 immatures were seen at Zirbel Sl. on 25 Jul (JLW). 1 or 2 were seen elsewhere in Clay, Fremont, Palo Alto, Polk, Story, Tama, and Winnebago counties.
- Great Blue Heron:** 4 colonies were reported: 28 nests at Saylorville Res. (BEn), 8+ nests w of Union in Hardin Co. (MPR), 8 adults e of Centerville (RLC), and 50 adults on L. Rathbun (RLC).
- Great Egret:** As many as 26 were found in the floodwaters below Saylorville Res. in late Jul (BEn). 2-5 in Fremont Co. in early Jun (BKP, LJP) was the only other report.
- Snowy Egret:** 1 or 2 were found in SW Fremont Co. on 6, 20 Jul (BKP, LJP, EIA, EuA, MPR), the first in summer since 1990.
- Little Blue Heron:** An adult at Riverton A. on 20 Jun (DRP), 5 adults in SW Fremont Co. on 6 Jul (BKP, LJP), 2 immatures in SW Fremont Co. on 20 Jul (EIA, EuA, MPR), and 1 near Forney L. on 24 Jul (JLF) are all the reports.
- Cattle Egret:** Cattle Egrets were everywhere, especially in SW Iowa where an incredible 1,067 were counted at 4 sites in Fremont Co. on 18 Jul (BKP, LJP), easily the most ever found in Iowa. I received reports of Cattle Egrets from 14 observers who found them in Appanoose, Cherokee, Clay, Dickinson, Emmet, Fremont, Jasper, Kossuth, Louisa, Marshall, Mills, Polk, Pottawattamie, and Story counties. Besides those in SW Iowa, high counts included 50+ s of Cherokee on 7 Jul (Joe Grover fide MMB), 26 over Ames on 13 Jun (BEh), and 62 at Moockley Prairie near Polk City on 31 Jul (BEn).
- Black-crowned Night-Heron:** 1-9 were found in Cerro Gordo, Dickinson, Emmet, Palo Alto, and Story counties. No one mentioned evidence of nesting.
- Snow Goose:** A blue-phase bird summered at Terra L. in Johnston (BEn).
- Green-winged Teal:** 1 or 2 were found in Emmet, Palo Alto, Polk, and Winneshiek counties, about typical for summer.
- Northern Pintail:** A pair at Colo Ponds until early Jul (HZ), 2 in Fremont Co. on 4 Jun (BKP, LJP), and a male near Union Slough N.W.R. on 26 Jun (MCK) were all the reports, the first summer reports for this species since 1990.
- Blue-winged Teal:** This was an abundant nester in the Great Lakes region (JJD).
- Northern Shoveler:** A brood was found in Cerro Gordo Co. on 25 Jul (JLW). 1-4, mostly pairs, were found in Cerro Gordo, Dickinson, Kossuth, and Story counties.
- Gadwall:** Singles were found at Coralville Res. (THK) and at 3 sites in Dickinson Co. (JJD), all in June.
- American Wigeon:** A male at the IPL Ponds on 14 Jun (BKP, LJP) was the only report.
- Canvasback:** A brood of 3 at Big Wall L. on 22 Jul (THK) was the only indication of nesting. Single males were found at Swan L. in Johnson Co., near Union Slough N.W.R., at Rice L., and at Zirbel Slough, all in June.
- Redhead:** 2 broods were at Hottes L. on 24 Jul (LAS). 1-9 were found in Clay, Dickinson, Fremont, Kossuth, and Worth counties.
- Ring-necked Duck:** 8 (5 m, 3 f) were at Swan L. in Johnson Co. on 10 Jul (THK) and up to 6 were at the IPL Ponds from 20 Jun-4 Jul (BKP, LJP).
- Lesser Scaup:** 1-9, mostly males, were found in Cerro Gordo, Dickinson, Johnson, Linn, Pottawattamie, and Wright counties, more than are found most summers. 9 males at Grover L. on 14 Jun (JJD) were the most.
- Hooded Merganser:** A brood at Dunbar Sl. in Greene Co. was a local first (Mike Klein fide JJD). 1-3, mostly females, were found in Cerro Gordo, Johnson, Muscatine, Polk, and Sioux counties.
- Common Merganser:** A male s of McPaul in Fremont Co. on 1 Jun (BKP, LJP) and a female at Rathbun Res. on 3 Jun (RLC) were the only reports.
- Ruddy Duck:** A brood was at W. Hottes L. on 24 Jul (LAS). From 2 to 10 were in Fremont, Greene, Kossuth, Story, Winneshiek, and Worth counties, a somewhat wider summer distribution than is usual for this species.
- Turkey Vulture:** Is this species increasing in Iowa? Whereas a few years ago, vultures were seldom seen in either Algona or Ames, as many as 23 and 15 were seen in Algona (MCK) and Ames (JJD) respectively this year.
- Osprey:** Individuals were seen at Marble L. in Dickinson Co. on 15 Jun (NBc), at Saylorville Res. on 19 Jun and from 9-29 Jul (Scott Rolfes and Kevin Griggs fide JJD), and in NE Madison Co. on 26 Jul (EIA, EuA). Will these summering birds eventually try to nest in Iowa?
- Mississippi Kite:** 1 of the Clive pair returned in mid May and the second arrived on 12 Jun. They were carrying nest material on 19, 20 Jun (Fred Crane fide MJ, "DRP).

Bald Eagle: The number of active nests reached 24 (BEh), a modern record for Iowa.

Northern Harrier: A nest with 4 young near Anderson Prairie in Emmet Co. on Jul was the only confirmed nest but pairs were seen in both NW Palo Alto and SW Emmet counties (BEh).

Cooper's Hawk: A pair nested near Jester P. in Polk Co. (BEh). 1 s of Algona on 16 Jun (MCK) and 1 w of Luther in Boone Co. on 31 Jul (James Pease fide JJD) were the only other reports.

Broad-winged Hawk: Individuals were seen at Effigy Mounds N.M. (DeC), Yellow River F. (DeC), and near Saylorville Res. (BEh), all in mid June.

Swainson's Hawk: The nest e of Mason City had 2 young (JLW, RAG). Another bird summered s of Algona (MCK).

American Kestrel: 44 young were banded at 14 nest boxes in Cherokee Co. (DBi).

Peregrine Falcon: As a result of the release program, nests were active in two cities. Three eggs hatched in Des Moines but one young died. Two of four eggs hatched in Cedar Rapids. One of those died and was replaced by another captive-raised bird (LSJ).

Ring-necked Pheasant: The number of pheasants on the Cherokee BBS was the fewest in 13 years (DBi).

Virginia Rail: Evidence of nesting was noted in Clay and Dickinson counties (Julie Schreiber fide JJD). Young were seen at Silver L. on 23 Jun (JLW) and Zirbel Sl. on 27, 28 Jul (RAG).

Sora: Evidence of nesting was found in Cherokee (DBi), Dickinson, and Emmet counties (Julie Schreiber fide JJD). Young were seen at Zirbel Sl. on 22 Jul (THK).

Common Moorhen: 1 at Union Slough N.W.R. on 17 Jun (MCK) and 1 at Silver L. on 23 Jun (RAG, JLW) were the only reports.

American Coot: Nests or broods were found in Cerro Gordo, Clay, Dickinson, Emmet, Fremont, Kossuth, Palo Alto, Story, and Worth counties.

Sandhill Crane: I received a late report of a nest with two eggs at Green Island W.A. in Jackson Co. on 29 April (Randy Robinson fide LSJ). It was lost to high water and the adults moved to Goose L. in Clinton Co. (Randy Robinson fide JLF). A young bird was seen with a pair at Otter Creek in late Jun/Jul (THK, Marlowe Wilson fide JJD). A total of 6 adults were present. Even with this year's high water, this species seems to be establishing itself in Iowa.

Lesser Golden-Plover: 1 at Moeckley Prairie on 5 Jun (BEh) was the last spring bird. 2 near Union Slough N.W.R. on 26 Jun (MCK) may have been summering while 11 s of Zirbel Sl. on 25 Jul (JLW) were southbound.

Semipalmated Plover: 2 at the IPL Ponds on 18 Jul (BKP, LJP) were the first fall birds.

Piping Plover: At least 3 pairs nested at the IPL Ponds and produced at least 5 young (BKP, LJP). 7 adults there on 23 Jul (BKP, LJP) and 2 s of Percival in Fremont Co. on 24 Jul (JLF) must have been migrants.

Killdeer: 90 were at the IPL Ponds on 31 Jul (BKP, LJP).

American Avocet: 1 at the IPL Ponds on 26 Jul (BKP, LJP) was the only report.

Greater Yellowlegs: 3 at Moeckley Prairie on 25 Jul (BEh) was the only report.

Lesser Yellowlegs: 2 at Colo Ponds on 28 Jun (HZ) were early. 2 in Cerro Gordo Co. on 26 Jul (RAG) was the only other report.

Solitary Sandpiper: 1 n of Ackley, Franklin Co. (MPr, BPr) and 2 at Zirbel Sl. (RAG), both on 6 Jul were the first. Other than 1 at Coralville Res. on 10 Jul (THK), all the others were in the last week of July.

Willet: 1 in Mills Co. on 30 Jul (BKP, LJP) and another s of Booneville on 31 Jul (EIA, EuA) were the only reports.

Spotted Sandpiper: A juvenile near Union Slough N.W.R. on 26 Jun (MCK) and 2 young and 2 adults at the IPL Ponds on 4 Jul (BKP, LJP) were the only reports.

Upland Sandpiper: I had reports from Cedar, Cerro Gordo (brood), Cherokee, Dallas, Iowa, O'Brien, Palo Alto (brood), Polk (brood), Story, Wayne, and Winneshiek (brood) counties, somewhat fewer than usual.

Ruddy Turnstone: 1 at the IPL Ponds on 1 Jun (BKP, LJP) was the only report.

Semipalmated Sandpiper: 3 at the IPL Ponds on 6 Jul were the first (3rd earliest) and 11 there on 18 Jul were the most (BKP, LJP).

Least Sandpiper: 1 at Ames on 26 Jun (JJD, details) was early (3rd earliest). The only other reports were 1 at the IPL Ponds on 6 Jul and 6 there on 31 Jul (BKP, LJP).

White-rumped Sandpiper: 50 nw of Gilmore City on 5 Jun (JJD) was the only report.

Pectoral Sandpiper: Other than 2 in Mills Co. on 31 Jul (BKP, LJP), Cerro Gordo Co. had all the reports of this usually common migrant. The peak there was 105 on 26 Jul (RAG).

Stilt Sandpiper: 1 e of Ames on 26 Jun (*JJD, record earliest), and 4 on 26 Jul and 3 on 28 Jul, both in Cerro Gordo Co. (RAG) were the only reports.

Buff-breasted Sandpiper: 5 near Booneville on 28 Jul (EIA, EuA) and 2 at the IPL Ponds on 31 Jul (BKP, LJP) were the only reports.

American Woodcock: A brood was seen near Melbourne in Marshall Co. on 5 Jun (Matt Patterson fide JJD). The only other reports were 1 e of Larrabee on 4 Jun (MMB) and 2 on Caylor Prairie in Dickinson Co. on 16 Jun (George Brown fide NBe).

Franklin's Gull: 75 at the IPL Ponds on 4 Jun had dwindled to only 2 on 7 Jun (BKP, LJP), suggesting these were late migrants. In the Great Lakes region, as many as 42 were near Grover L. on 14 Jun (JJD). 1 at Saylorville Res. on 14 Jun (BEn) was the only other report.

Ring-billed Gull: In northwestern Iowa, 75 were near Spirit Lake on 15 Jun (JJD) and 100+ were at Trumbull L. on 2 Jul (LAS). Elsewhere up to 24 were in Cerro Gordo Co. on 23 Jul (RAG), a few summered at Saylorville Res. (BEn), 1 was at Swan L., Johnson Co. on 15, 28 Jun (DRP, DLD), and 6 were at the IPL Ponds on 4 Jun (BKP, LJP).

Caspian Tern: I received reports of 1-8 in Appanoose, Fremont, Polk, and Pottawattamie counties.

Common Tern: 1 at the IPL Ponds on 4 Jun (BKP, LJP) and 1 at Rice L. on 6 Jul (MPR, details) were the only reports.

Forster's Tern: None of the June reports (Cerro Gordo, Clay, Fremont, Palo Alto, Pottawattamie, Winneshiek, and Wright counties) gave evidence of nesting. The 25 in Fremont Co. on 18 Jul (BKP, LJP) must have been migrants.

Least Tern: As many as 9 were at the IPL Ponds but they didn't nest there this year (BKP, LJP). Four adults and two flying young there on 23 Jul were migrants from elsewhere (BKP, LJP).

Black Tern: Those seen in June in Cerro Gordo, Clay, Fremont, Polk, Pottawattamie Worth, and Wright counties may have included some nesters although no details were given. The 22 at the Colo Ponds on 25 Jul (HZ) must have been southbound migrants.

Black-billed Cuckoo: I received reports from only Cass and Cerro Gordo counties; several observers noted this species seemed scarce.

Yellow-billed Cuckoo: I received reports from Allamakee, Appanoose, Cerro Gordo, Cherokee, Fremont, Hardin, Jefferson, Marshall, Polk, Story, Wayne, Winneshiek, and Worth counties. That encompasses all four corners of the state.

Barn Owl: 1 s of Larchwood in Lyon Co. on 27 Jul (DCH, details) was the only report and was unexpectedly far north.

Common Nighthawk: A young bird on a roof in Fairfield (DCP) was encouraging as I fear many rooftop nests suffered high mortality in the heavy rains this summer.

Chuck-will's-widow: 2 were at the usual site near Waubonsie S.P. on 4 Jun (BKP, LJP).

Whip-poor-will: 2 e of Cherokee on 4 Jun (MMB) are at the edge of this species' usual range.

Ruby-throated Hummingbird: I received reports of 1 or 2 from Allamakee, Fremont, Johnson, Linn, Marshall, Polk, Story, and Warren counties.

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: 3 were at a nest at Nobles Island in Allamakee Co. on 12 Jun and several were at Effigy Mounds N.M. all summer (DeC). They were common in the Mississippi River floodplain in Allamakee Co. (Melinda Knutson fide JJD).

Pileated Woodpecker: 1 at Amana in Iowa Co. on 19 Jun (DRP) and another w of Perry on the Raccoon R. on 7 Jul (EIA, EuA) were a bit out of this species' usual range.

Olive-sided Flycatcher: Late spring migrants included 1 at Wolf Creek P. in Grundy Co. on 3 Jun (MPR), 1 at Algona on 3 Jun (MCK), 1 near Pine Lake S.P. in Hardin Co. on 4 Jun (MPR), and 2 in Cherokee Co. on 8 Jun (DBi, ties 3rd latest).

Yellow-bellied Flycatcher: 1 in Davenport on 1 Jun (PCP), 1 at Pine Lake S.P. on 1, 4 Jun (MPR), and 10 at Call S.P. in Kossuth Co. on 2 Jun (MCK, details) were all the reports.

Acadian Flycatcher: 1 on a nest at Coralville Res. on 3 Jul (THK) and 2 n of Stone City in Jones Co. on 26 Jun (CEd) were new sites. 1 or 2 were reported from the usual sites in Allamakee, Appanoose, and Lee counties.

Alder Flycatcher: 1 on 3 Jun in Wolf Creek P. (MPR) was the only report.

Willow Flycatcher: A nest was found in S Warren Co. (JSi). 1 or 2 were in Appanoose, Cerro Gordo, Clay, Mahaska, Marshall, Poweshiek, Story, Wayne, Winnebago, and Winneshiek counties.

Least Flycatcher: 1 at Call S.P. on 2 Jun (MCK) and 1 at Elk Creek M. in Worth Co. on 23 Jun (JLW) may have been summering while 1 at Call S.P. on 18 Jul (MCK) probably was southbound.

Eastern Phoebe: A nest was active in Fairfield in early Jun (CAA).

Western Kingbird: The nest at the state capitol in Des Moines produced 2 young (MJ). The only other report was 1 s of Bartlett in Fremont Co. on 19 Jul (MPR).

Scissor-tailed Flycatcher: One s of the IPL Ponds on 4 Jul (BKP, LJP, details) was the only report. Its somewhat short tail suggests it was an immature bird (but not from a local nest).

Horned Lark: An albino bird was seen near Fairfield for the third straight year (DCP).

Purple Martin: 90 in Fremont Co. on 31 Jul (BKP, LJP) was the only post-breeding flock reported.

Cliff Swallow: A large colony near Bluffton and several smaller ones, all in Winneshiek Co. (DeC), were the only reports.

American Crow: 225 were flying to a roost in Ames on 26 Jun (JJD), indicating that these roosts are not just a fall and winter phenomena.

Red-breasted Nuthatch: 1 n of Iowa City on 29 Jun (JLF) is only the second summer report in 8 years.

Brown Creeper: 1 or 2 were at Huron Island in Des Moines Co., s of Bellevue in Jackson Co., at Big Sand Mound Preserve in Muscatine Co., and in Davenport (PCP) in early June. They were probably nesting at all of these sites.

Carolina Wren: 1 or 2 were found in Jefferson, Lee, Scott, and Warren counties.

Sedge Wren: I received reports from Cerro Gordo, Clay, Dickinson, Emmet, Howard, Palo Alto, Polk, Pottawattamie, and Winneshiek counties. 2 showing territorial behavior at Caylor Prairie in Dickinson Co. on 8 Jun were thought to be early for such activity (NBe).

Blue-gray Gnatcatcher: A veteran NW Iowa observer enjoyed finding 2 at Lacey-Keosauqua S.P. in Van Buren Co. (EJB).

Eastern Bluebird: 340 fledged at Elkhart, the most ever (DDM)

Veery: 2 or 3 were found in Johnson, Jones, and Kossuth counties. 1 at West Lake Okoboji on 21 Jun (NBe) was west of its usual range.

Wood Thrush: 1-4 were found in Allamakee, Appanoose, Fremont, Iowa, Jasper, and Winneshiek counties.

Gray Catbird: 1 seen in Amana Woods on 16, 18, 24 Jan (JLF, THK, DRP) was left out of the winter field reports.

Northern Mockingbird: 2 near Goose L. in Clinton Co. on 2 Jun (PCP), 1 in Johnson Co. on 15 Jun (DRP), 2 on 4 Jul at Big Sand Mound Preserve (PCP), and 1 n of Polk City on 16 Jul (JJD) were all the reports.

Cedar Waxwing: Several observers thought this species was more abundant than usual this year.

Loggerhead Shrike: I received reports from Boone, Fremont, Mahaska, Marshall, Polk (brood), Story, and Wayne counties, somewhat fewer than usual.

White-eyed Vireo: Other than 1 or 2 at the Croton Unit of Shimek F., the only other report was 1 at L. Ahquabi S.P. in Warren Co. on 2 Jul (JSi).

Bell's Vireo: 1 or 2 were reported in Appanoose, Fremont, Johnson, Muscatine, Polk, Story, and Wayne counties.

Yellow-throated Vireo: 1-4 were in Allamakee, Hardin, Polk, and Winneshiek counties.

Blue-winged Warbler: 1 at L. Macbride on 22 Jun (CEd) and 1 or 2 at the Croton Unit of Shimek F. on 23 Jun, 3 Jul (DRP, CEd) were the only reports.

Tennessee Warbler: 1 in Algona on 1, 2 Jun (MCK) was the only report.

Nashville Warbler: 1 singing in Ames on 26 Jul (Bill Norris fide JJD) was early (2nd earliest).

Northern Parula: Singles were found in Appanoose, Lee, and Polk counties, fewer than most summers. Flooding made it impossible to reach some of the sites this species occupies.

Chestnut-sided Warbler: 1 at Big Sand Mound Preserve on 4 Jun (PCP) and 1 at West Lake Okoboji on 6, 7 Jun (NBe) were the only reports.

Blackburnian Warbler: A male at Everly in Clay Co. on 6 Jun (LAS) was very late (3rd latest).

Yellow-throated Warbler: Single males at Big Sand Mound Preserve on 4 Jun, 4 Jul (PCP) and L. Macbride on 27 Jun (CEd, THK) were the only reports. The latter appears to be a first county record.

Prairie Warbler: Several observers reported a male at the Croton Unit of Shimek F. (*DRP, CEd); on 24 Jun a pair was there (JLF). Another male was heard e of Charleston in Lee Co. (Brian Warson fide JJD).

Cerulean Warbler: 1 or 2 were present at numerous sites in June; Shimek S.F. (CEd, DRP), Coralville Res. (CEd, THK), Macbride Nature Reserve A. in Johnson Co. (CEd), n of Stone City in Jones Co. (CEd), Effigy Mounds N.M. (DeC), Yellow River F. (DeC), Call S.P. (MCK), and Saylorville Res. (BEN).

Black-and-white Warbler: A male at Waubonsie S.P. on 4 Jun (BKP, LJP) and a female at Cardinal M. in Winneshiek Co. on 20 Jul (DeC) were the only reports.

- American Redstart:** 12 at Decorah on 3 Jun and 14 at Effigy Mounds N.M. on 19 Jun (DeC) were the most reported.
- Prothonotary Warbler:** 1 at L. Macbride S.P. was feeding young on 10 Jul (THK). 1 or 2 were at Brenton Sl. in Dallas Co. on 3, 23 Jul (JSi), Cardinal M. on 6, 21 Jun (DeC), and Riverton A. on 1, 20 Jun (BKP, LJP, DRP).
- Worm-eating Warbler:** 1 at the Croton Unit of Shimek F. on 3 Jul (CED) was the only report.
- Ovenbird:** 15 heard at Yellow River F. on 7 Jul (DeC) was the most reported.
- Louisiana Waterthrush:** Besides a brood at L. Macbride on 22 Jun (CED, a local first) 1 or 2 were found in Allamakee, Jones, and Winneshiek counties.
- Kentucky Warbler:** 1-6 were found in Allamakee, Appanoose, Johnson, Jones, and Lee counties, all in the usual range of this species.
- Mourning Warbler:** 1 at Wolf Creek P. in Grundy Co. on 3 Jun (MPR), 1 in Algona on 3 Jun (MCK), and 2 in Algona on 5 Jun (MCK) were all the reports.
- Hooded Warbler:** Besides the usual bird in Shimek F., individuals were found at Yellow River F. on 5 Jun (DeC), in Des Moines from 7-27 Jun (BEn), at L. Ahquabi S.P. on 19 Jun (JSi), and n of Stone City on 26 Jun (CED). The latter three are new sites.
- Yellow-breasted Chat:** The only reports were 1-3 at Shimek F. on 24 Jun, 3 Jul (JLF, CED) and 1 at Rolling Thunder Prairie in Warren Co. on 23 Jun (JSi). Is this species becoming scarcer?
- Scarlet Tanager:** The only reports were from opposite corners of the state; Waubonsie S.P. (MPR) and Winneshiek and Allamakee counties (DeC).
- Blue Grosbeak:** 1 n of Liscomb on 11 Jun (*MPR) and 1 at Webster City on 16 Jun (Mike Havlik fide JJD, details) were both far out of the species' normal range while 1 at Big Sand Mound Preserve on 4 Jul (PCP) was somewhat north of its limited SE Iowa range. 1-6 in Fremont, Lee, O'Brien, and Pottawattamie were in the species' usual range.
- Dickcissel:** Only a few observers mentioned this species with mixed opinions on whether numbers were up or down.
- Lark Sparrow:** 3-13 were found in Appanoose, Cass, Fremont, and Muscatine (2 broods) counties.
- Henslow's Sparrow:** 1 near Melbourne in Marshall Co. on 10 Jun (Matt Patterson fide JJD) and 3 near Lacey-Keosauqua S.P. on 24 Jun (JLF) were the only reports.
- Western Meadowlark:** Petersen noted large declines from 1991 to 1993 on his BBS in Clinton and Jackson counties (PCP).
- Great-tailed Grackle:** A nest at Red Tail Ridge area in Cherokee Co. had 3 young on 4 Jun but was lost to predators (DBi). 4 were at Goose L. in Greene Co. on 5 Jun (JJD), 5+ were at the IPL Ponds on 20 Jun (*DRP), and single males were in SW Fremont Co. on 20 Jun (*DRP) and near Osceola in Clarke Co. on 26 Jun (DRP, details). Fuller found 7 in Fremont, Mills, and Pottawattamie counties on 24 Jul (JLF).
- Orchard Oriole:** 1-4 were in Cerro Gordo, Cherokee, Fremont, Hamilton, and Johnson counties. An adult and young were found at L. Macbride in Johnson Co. on 24 Jul (CED).
- House Finch:** Now abundant in Decorah, this species was scarce there 3 years ago (DeC).
- Pine Siskin:** An adult with a brood was seen in Glenwood in late June (Doug Rose fide WRS).
- Eurasian Tree Sparrow:** An adult and 2 young were at the usual site n of Burlington on 17 Jun (DRP). This is the first report of nesting by this species in Iowa.

CONTRIBUTORS

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COMMENT

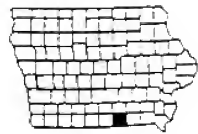
This is the tenth summer field report I have written. Over that time more than 100 people have contributed to this report. I am in debt to all of you who have contributed reports, whether it is a single sighting or many. It is only with the information that you provide me that I can write this column. Lest you think that this is an idle exercise with limited short-term value, I would argue strongly to the contrary. I firmly believe that 50 years from now, students of Iowa's birds will find the information that we are recording now invaluable in understanding the changes in abundance and distribution that undoubtedly will occur in those intervening years. If anything, they will probably wonder why we did not record more information. To give you some idea of what has happened in just the past 10 years, consider the following. Through your efforts, we have been able to help document the spread of three species new to Iowa: Great-tailed Grackle, House Finch, Eurasian Tree Sparrow and the recovery of the Bald Eagle and Carolina Wren. We have documented the first nesting by Cattle Egrets, White-faced Ibis, and Red Crossbill and the return (no pun intended) of Least Terns, Sandhill Cranes, and Peregrine Falcons as nesting species in Iowa. Two species new to Iowa, Black-necked Stilt and Rufous Hummingbird, were found during these summers. Numerous other significant nesting, migration, and distribution records have also been recorded in these columns. Unfortunately some of the species we now find in Iowa may disappear in the next half century (e.g., King Rail, Least Tern, Black Tern, Barn Owl, Bewick's Wren, Cerulean Warbler). Perhaps your report on where you found a species now will help future workers prepare plans for that species' recovery, just as past information on Peregrine Falcons has helped in the current recovery of that species. I am sure that those people will value and use your contributions to this column. Although this column may appear to some to be just a report card of who found what and where, remember that it also is providing a data set valuable for future workers. Because of that use, all of us who prepare field reports expect and demand that the data we work with are accurate and complete. Please remember that the next time you have a documentation form to fill out. And please, keep sending in your field reports. After all, it is your column.

4024 Arkansas Drive, Ames, IA 50014

VERMILION FLYCATCHER IN APPANOOSE COUNTY

JIM SINCLAIR

On 25 October 1992, Rick Trieff and I were birding at Rathbun Reservoir in Appanoose County. At approximately 10:30 a.m., as I ascended the stairs to the Dedication Shelter at Island View Park, I noticed a small flycatcher-shaped bird perched on the far railing of the shelter. The bird turned to face me and, at 25 feet with 10 x 42 binoculars, was identifiable as an adult female Vermilion Flycatcher.



The bird was flycatcher shaped, 5-6 inches long with head and mantle a uniform medium gray color. The bill was small and black, and the eye was dark with a broad, ill-defined dark mask. The wings were the same color as the mantle with buffy feather edgings and two less-than-prominent buffy wing bars. The throat was white, and the breast and upper belly were white with faint gray streaking. The rest of the belly and flanks were warm reddish-orange. The bird was actively flycatching and also pumped its tail while perched.

The flycatcher remained near the Dedication Shelter for the remainder of the day and was observed by numerous birders. Unfortunately, the bird could not be relocated at dawn the next morning.

This is the third record of a Vermilion Flycatcher in Iowa. However, this is the first female and the first fall record. Both previous sightings were males, and both were found in May (Van Dyk 1983, Anderson 1989). Fall vagrancy records for states bordering Iowa include one each for Minnesota (Janssen 1987), Nebraska (Bray et al. 1986), Wisconsin (Robbins 1991), and South Dakota (South Dakota Ornithologists' Union 1991). The Vermilion Flycatcher is a casual transient in Missouri with five fall records from September through mid-November (Robbins and Easterla 1992).

Although I confidently identified this bird as an adult female, that confidence was soon shaken. The book I use in the field (National Geographic Society 1983) referred to fall immature birds as more closely resembling the respective adults. This is somewhat misleading in that immature females rarely show any red or orange while immature males show varying amounts of red-orange, especially on the belly and flanks where the adult female's red is located. Fortunately the illustrations show red blotching in the breast and crown of the immature male while the adult female's red is restricted to the lower belly and flanks. This pattern is also described by Pyle et al. (1987), therefore confirming my original identification of an adult female Vermilion Flycatcher in Iowa.

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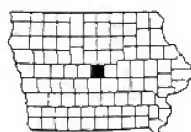
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810 North B. St., Indianola, IA

MOUNTAIN BLUEBIRD IN STORY COUNTY

MATTHEW PATTERSON

On 17 March 1992, I was walking through a pasture/woods complex just south of Ames hoping to identify some early spring migrants. I came across a small flock of Eastern Bluebirds moving and foraging ahead of me. Being the first Eastern Bluebirds of the season for me, I stopped for a look.



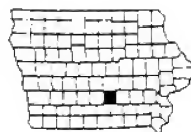
To my surprise, my eyes fell on one solid blue bird with white underparts within the larger group. Knowing immediately that I was looking at a Mountain Bluebird, I began to make note of its behavior and field marks. The bird was perched 4 to 5 feet above the ground. It allowed a close approach of 15 feet while it repeatedly dropped to the ground to feed. Its blue color was lighter and more brilliant than its eastern relative. The breast was a paler blue that faded to a white belly. This bird's legs stood more erect and its body more horizontal than the Eastern Bluebirds. I watched the bird for 20 minutes and then left to get a camera. I returned a few hours later and on the next day, but was unable to relocate the bird. This is the seventh accepted record of Mountain Bluebirds in Iowa and the first for Story County. The mid-March date, about the time that migrant Eastern Bluebirds start to arrive in Iowa, fits the pattern of several of the previous Mountain Bluebird records from Iowa (see Steffens and Johnson, *Iowa Bird Life* 61:119-120, 1961).

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THREE LOON SPECIES AT RED ROCK RESERVOIR

JIM FULLER

During the I.O.U. field trip to Red Rock Reservoir on 7 November 1992, a Red-throated Loon was discovered near the marina boat ramp of the West Wallashuck Recreation Area in Marion County. Almost immediately after setting up my scope early the next morning, I found what I identified as the Red-throated Loon only about 200 yards to the east. There were also a



number of Common Loons in the area, sometimes with one or more in the same scope field. Pam and Reid Allen arrived shortly after I found the bird, and as Reid was watching it in his scope, he exclaimed that another loon had flown in and landed very close to the Red-throated Loon, and it was not a Common Loon. It was a Pacific Loon. By this time the birds were 300 yards off and drifting farther

away, but we obtained good looks of these two birds together, as well as with Common Loons.

The Red-throated Loon was smaller than the nearby Common Loons, estimated 75 percent of their size. The neck was also noticeably thinner. The throat and front of the neck were white, and there was a definite difference between that white and the gray of the back of the neck and top of the head. The demarcation was pretty much straight up-and-down, as compared to the patterned (white indented) side of the neck of the Common Loon. In addition, the dark portion of the head and neck of the Common Loon was a darker gray than the Red-throated. The bill of the Red-throated was noticeably thinner than that of the Common Loon, and it appeared to be tilted up. When the Red-throated was closest, some white speckling could be seen on the back.

The Pacific Loon appeared to be about the same size as the Red-throated, lacked a patterned neck, but had a very definite demarcation (even more so than the Red-throated) between the white of the foreneck and the dark of the hindneck. The color of the top of the head and face, back of the neck, and back/wings was a gray-brown, compared to the almost black of the Common Loon. The white of the chin, foreneck, and breast was much less extensive than on the Common Loons. The dark area of the face included the eye, and dropped straight down the neck to the bend of the wing. The Pacific Loon also had a smaller bill than the Common Loons, but it was straight, compared to the upturned bill of the Red-throated.

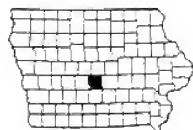
The next day, 9 November, Tom Kent relocated all the loons at the same site and observed a faint chin strap on the Pacific Loon when that bird was as close as 100 yards. To be able to see and compare three species of loons together, two of which are casual in Iowa, is most unusual.

6 Longview Knoll, NE, Iowa City, IA 52240

A GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL IN POLK COUNTY IN SPRING

JIM SINCLAIR

At 11:30 a.m. on 7 March 1992, from the parking lot of Sandpiper Beach at Saylorville Lake in Polk County I noticed a flock of approximately 60 gulls loafing on a sand spit just beyond the beach. Amongst the Ring-billed and Herring gulls was one gull which stood out because of its large size. I approached from the northeast to within 200 yards at which point the gull in question took wing. The bird proceeded up the lake shore passing me at approximately 100 yards at eye level. This allowed me a good look under excellent viewing conditions with 10 x 42 binoculars.



The gull was very large, dwarfing even the Herring Gulls with which it had been standing. The bill, which was all black and massive, was a prominent enough feature as to draw immediate attention. The head and neck were pale and without noticeable pattern. On the other hand, the back and upper wing were a strongly contrasting black and white pattern. As the bird proceeded upstream, dark secondary stripes were visible along with a pale rump and a dark tail band. The above features indicated to me that the bird was a first-year Great Black-backed Gull.

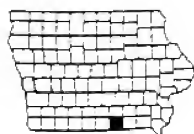
The North American population of the Great Black-backed Gull has been increasing for close to a century and as of yet there is no sign that the expansion of this species has stopped. The species was first reported in Iowa in 1978. In all, there are about 15 reports from Iowa; 11 from winter, 2 in fall, and 1 in summer. The above report is the first spring record. Reflecting this increase, the Great Black-backed Gull status on the latest checklist of Iowa birds (Kent and Bendorf, *Iowa Bird Life* 61:101-109, 1991) has been upgraded from accidental to casual.

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RED KNOTS AT RATHBUN RESERVOIR

CHARLOTTE SCOTT

On 8 October 1992, between 7:45 and 8:45 p.m, I was parked 30-50 feet from a stretch of muddy beach on south Rathbun Lake near the dedication site in Appanoose County. It had been raining but had cleared. For two weeks we had been having very good shorebird activity at this spot, and that morning had been watching Sanderlings, Pectoral Sandpipers, and two dowitchers feeding. Three birds flew in and joined the dowitchers. They were the same stocky, plump shape as the dowitchers but smaller in size and had much shorter bills. They stayed with the dowitchers the entire time we watched and fed similarly--rapid probing in the mud and shallow water, sometimes going so deep their eyes were covered.



The black bills were straight, fairly heavy, and 1.5 to 1.75 times the length of the head. The legs were short and dusky colored. Their backs were gray, upper breasts a lighter gray, and very white on the belly. A distinct line separated the upper breast and white belly though not as decisive as on a Pectoral Sandpiper. The overall breast color appeared much lighter than on the dowitchers. The wings in flight had a faint, fine white line the length of the coverts, and the rump appeared light. The wing edges were dark, and a faint white eye line was visible. The overall appearance was of a nondescript gray, short-legged shorebird.

I have watched Red Knots in winter plumage in Florida and felt comfortable identifying these birds as Red Knots. The gals with me, Dorothy Cornett, Kay Malmberg, and Mary Montgomery and I viewed the birds through the scope, and we agreed on the identification. We alerted other members of the Rathbun Bird Club. At least two others, Ray Cummins and Tom Johnson, saw the knots later that day. They each saw four birds, and agreed with our identification.

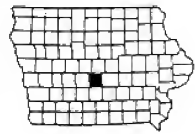
Most authorities I consulted agree that the Red Knot migrates from southern South America mainly along the Atlantic Coast and is a rare migrant in the interior. Although for many years there were few records from Iowa, there have been at least eight records in the past decade, all in fall with dates from 5 August to 27 September. Most involve only a single bird. This is the latest fall record from Iowa, and other than 14 seen in May 1934, is the most seen together in Iowa.

320 East Lee Street, Seymour, IA 52590

BLACK RAIL SIGHTING IN POLK COUNTY

DICK KRAEMER AND BARBARA MILLER

On 26 April 1992, between 2:00 and 3:00 p.m., we were birding an area 0.5 miles east of NE 14th Street (Highway 69) on NE 70th Avenue on the south side of Ankeny. This marshy area, locally known as Carney Marsh, is a



combination of open water, cattails and grassy areas with trees along most of the edges except for the west edge (railway) and the road (NE. 70th Ave.) that cuts through the marsh itself. We were sitting on the railroad tracks on the west side of the marsh enjoying a good view of the marsh and several Soras. After 10 to 15 minutes of just watching, a small black bird appeared at the edge of last year's cattails and then disappeared. Fortunately it and its companion reappeared six or seven more times, allowing us time to confirm our original identification; two adult Black Rails.

These birds, which were about 50 feet apart, were at the edge of the cattails exhibiting similar behaviors of working their way in and out of the cattails and poking around in the mud with their bills. We did not see them fly or hear them call. They acted very cautious, never ventured far from the cover of the cattails, and could have been overlooked if we hadn't elected just to sit and watch for movement in the marsh.

The birds were easy to identify. Their location, behavior, and a clear view of all of their major identifying marks supported our original thoughts of Black Rail. At first glance it was a totally dark little bird with a short tail and neck acting very "rail like." With subsequent views we could see both the white speckles on its back and the rusty nape patch that was visible with 10x50 binoculars. The birds were viewed at a distance varying from 75-125 feet on an overcast day. Subsequent attempts to see the rails during the next several days failed. A neighbor, who watches the marsh for the owners, complained that someone in waders had trespassed into the marsh and waded through most of it the day after our observation. Perhaps this was enough disturbance for these reclusive birds to move on.

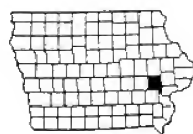
There are few other accepted records of the Black Rail in Iowa (see Dinsmore et al., 1984, *Iowa Birds*, Iowa State University Press, pp. 121-122). The most recent was one seen in Dickinson County on 8 October 1989 (Hansen, *Iowa Bird Life* 61:26-27, 1991).

2808 Randolph St., Waterloo, IA 50702 and 669 61st St., Des Moines, IA 50312

PINE WARBLERS IN WINTER AT IOWA CITY

JIM FULLER

While participating in the Iowa City Christmas Bird Count on 20 December 1992, Jim Scheib, Matt Prather, and I were searching for kinglets in pines around the Hancher Auditorium parking lot on the University of Iowa campus. It was about 9:00 a.m. when Jim excitedly yelled that he was looking at a warbler with yellow on it. As I arrived, two small birds flew and landed about 50 feet away. We soon relocated them foraging on the ground under some white pines.



Both birds were warbler size and shape, and one appeared generally yellow, while the other was a dull brown. We identified them as an adult and immature Pine Warbler.

The adult featured a breast and throat that were lemon yellow, with the color extending up the sides of the neck. The yellow faded into white on the lower belly, where there was some faint streaking. The head and upper back were greenish and unstreaked. The folded wings were gray-brown in color with two bold white wing bars. The tail was relatively long and a darker brown. Surrounding the dark eye was a distinct yellow eye ring. The bill was slender, and both it and the legs were dark.

The immature bird was generally a dull brown, with the only yellow a faint wash on the throat. Two wing bars and an eye ring were buffy-white. The underparts were an off-white with faint streaking along the sides. The brown back was unstreaked, and the bill and legs were dark.

In flight, both birds exhibited white in the tail. On several occasions, the adult gave a sharp, rather high pitched chip note, which was regular and continuous. The adult looked most like a Yellow-throated Vireo. However, its bill was more slender, and its body not so large and chunky as a vireo's. The immature in first basic plumage might be confused with Bay-breasted or Blackpoll warblers in the same plumage, but the combination of unstreaked back, dark legs, and close association with the adult Pine Warbler ruled out the other *Dendroica* species.

After informing the count participants at lunch, many were able to view the birds soon thereafter. At that time, Tom Kent photographed the warblers (Figure 1).

Almost daily for the next two and a half weeks they were relocated in the same area, with the last sighting on 6 January 1993, the day before a heavy snowfall. The warblers were always together, and usually associated with a group of four Golden-crowned Kinglets in the lower branches or on the ground under coniferous trees. It appeared that they were gleaning insects or larvae from the pine needles, and from the duff beneath the trees, and on one occasion, the adult was observed eating a moth. They favored sunny and wind-protected locations.

Pine Warblers are one of the more cold-tolerant warblers, and they winter in the southern and southeastern states. The only previous winter record in Iowa was 19 December 1991 to 10 February 1992, when an adult appeared in the yard and at the feeder of Gladys Black in Pleasantville (Schantz and Black, *Iowa Bird Life* 63:81-82, 1993).

6 Longview Knoll, NE, Iowa City, IA 52240

IOU BUSINESS

SPRING BUSINESS MEETING

Keosauqua, 15 May 1993 3:20 to 5:00 p.m.

PRESIDING: ANN M. BARKER, PRESIDENT

HILDA SICKELS, SECRETARY

Barker thanked Bob Cecil for organizing the meeting and the Iowa City Bird Club for their assistance. The minutes for the September 1992 business meeting were approved as published (motion by Carol Thompson, seconded by Beth Proescholdt).

Reports

Treasurer: Pam Allen presented complete financial statements for 1992, as well as membership information and the budget for 1993. Financially, the organization is in good shape. The report was accepted with thanks.

Records: Tom Kent reported that review of 1992 records is not quite completed. A cost analysis revealed that it would be simpler and cheaper for those submitting photos to send slides rather than prints.

Membership: Information about the I.O.U. is being sent to feeder survey participants who requested it. This has been a consistent source of new members.

Publications: *Iowa Bird Life* editor Jim Dinsmore will be away on sabbatical leave during the fall semester. He has arranged for regular publication of the journal to continue. The committee will meet during the fall meeting.

Library-Historical. The natural history book collection belong to the late Fred Pierce, former editor of *Iowa Bird Life*, has been sold.

Breeding Bird Atlas. The committee plans to award certificates to outstanding volunteers at the banquet. Photographs are needed for the publication; members were urged to contribute. Publication alternatives are being explored.

Big Day: Awards will be given during the fall meeting.

Education Booklet Promotion: This new committee was formed upon the dissolution of the Education Committee which had completed its task of publishing the booklet. Copies of the booklet have been distributed through the area education agencies. Appreciation was expressed to Linda Zaletel for her tremendous contributions to the project.

Spring count. Pete Petersen reported that 12 to 15 counties participated in the first count which was held on 9 May. There was not much response from volunteers; information was sent out to only 15 people. After discussion about when to hold the count, it was moved (Tom Kent, seconded by Rick Hollis) that we recommend that it be done on the same day as the national count. The motion carried.

Field trips. The trip to Kossuth County on 3 April attracted a large number of participants. The committee is planning a trip for 1994.

Iowa Birdline: Usage of the birdline has increased for the fifth straight year. The Board of Directors commended Jim Fuller for his diligent persistence in keeping Iowa birders informed and requested that he receive the first "President's Award", which will honor individuals who have given outstanding service to the Iowa Ornithologists' Union. The plaque will be presented at the banquet.

Old Business

Upcoming meetings: Lee Schoenewe and Jim Fuller will be planning the fall meeting for Spencer on 17-19 September. The spring 1994 meeting has been proposed for Ames on 20-22 May with Jim Dinsmore and Hank Zaletel in charge of arrangements. It was moved (Rick Hollis, seconded by Bud Gode) that we accept this proposal. The motion carried.

Review of Board action: At recent meetings, the Board of Directors voted:

1. to establish a policy of releasing the mailing list on a case by case basis and to keep any release especially relevant to Iowa birders;
2. not to recommend adoption of a code of ethics; and
3. to investigate recruiting outside speakers for spring and fall meetings using money in the meeting fund.

New Business

Election of officers: The following were elected to 2-year terms of office: President, Ann Barker; Vice-President, Jim Fuller; Board of Directors, O.J. (Bud) Gode, Ann Johnson, and Matthew Kenne.

Dues for 1994: The Board of Directors reviewed the dues structure and recommended no change for next year. It was moved (Pam Allen, seconded by Tom Kent) that the board's recommendation be accepted. The motion carried.

Carol Thompson raised the question of whether the organization should adopt a code of ethics. This was followed by extensive discussion. It was moved (Rick Hollis, seconded by Russ Widner) that a committee be formed to write a code of ethics for consideration for adoption by the membership.

The motion carried. The president will appoint the ad hoc committee.

A new "Guide to Iowa State Preserves" has been published and is available from John Fleckenstein. Jim Dinsmore relayed news of a vote of commendation for the I.O.U. from the American Ornithologists' Union for the group's work in holding the A.O.U. meeting in Ames in 1992.

CORRECTION

In looking over the 1992 CBC data published in *Iowa Bird Life* 63:35, I discovered that the Common Merganser data are missing. No one else has missed those data but assuming they will be valuable to future workers, they are as follows: Clinton-27, Princeton-489, Davenport-763, Muscatine-36, Oakville-15, Burlington-150, Keokuk-196, Mississippi River subtotal-1,676; Sioux City-44, DeSoto N.W.R.-79, Omaha-288, Glenwood-3, Shenandoah-1, Missouri River subtotal-415; Spirit Lake-37, Westfield-3, Northern Iowa subtotal-40; Iowa City-12, Saylorville Res.-484, Des Moines-19, Jamaica-2, Central Iowa subtotal-517; Rathbun-710, Red Rock-9,500, Southern Iowa subtotal-10,210. State total-12,858.--J.J.D.



Pine Warbler, Iowa City, 23 December 1993
Photo by Jim Fuller

